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Correspondence.

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Editor OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT STUDENT :—

I read with much interest the interpretation of John 20 : 27 by Dr. Thomas Laurie in the July issue of the STUDENT, and whilst I fully agree with him in his negation of any bodily deformity remaining on the saints in heaven, I must nevertheless take issue with the logical steps by which he arrives at this conclusion. It seems to me that all the proof passages and facts of the Resurrection History which he adduces to demonstrate that the "visibility of the marks of Christ's wounds varied with the needs of the moment," really prove quite the reverse. In the first place he thinks that Mary Magdalene would certainly have *said something* about the wounds had they been visible when she "stooped to clasp those blessed feet," and because no remark issued from her lips, therefore, he thinks, the wounds were not in or on Christ's body at that moment, or at least were unseen. Now there is no record that Mary Magdalene *alone* thus worshipped Christ. It was Mary Magdalene and the "other Mary," *two* Maries, who, returning from the tomb and the vision of an angel "with fear and great dread," i. e. very much excited, met Jesus and at once fell at His feet, took hold of them and worshipped Him. The very fact that both of them fell at His feet indicates, to my mind, that they both *instinctively* glanced thither for evidences to identify their crucified Lord, and seeing the wound-prints, those unmistakable and touching proofs of Christ's sufferings, in an ecstasy of love and devotion they cast themselves down to worship and adore. Moreover, under the intense excitement and deep joy of this meeting and of the immediately preceding events, it would have been very unnatural indeed for either of the Maries to stop to reason much less to *speak* of the scars on Christ's body. Their whole soul was completely absorbed in the presence, love and person of their dear Master, and very little of the process of thinking was possible. Their overwhelming feelings rendered them speechless. They simply longed to retain Him, and the prostration at His feet was instinctive, uncontrollable. The wound marks might easily have been there, and yet the women in their excitement may not have noticed them. But I am inclined to the former view, that they fell at His feet perhaps to kiss those dear tokens of their Lord's love and sufferings, and bathe them with tears of unspeakable joy. In either case the wound marks were there.

In the second place Dr. Laurie thinks that Cleopas and his companion would certainly have recognized their eloquent Fellow-traveler long before the breaking of bread at Emmaus, if the wound prints had been present on His hands and feet during that memorable walk. Luke 24 : 16 explains the situation, I should think, very clearly. "Their eyes were holden that they should not know Him." Jesus had His own reasons for casting a mist as it were over their eyes. The miracle (daze?) was in *them*, not in Him. It seems therefore more natural to believe that the marks of the crucifixion were present on the hands, feet and side of our risen Master during the first part of the 40 days. For they certainly were there when He suddenly stood in the midst of the eleven in that locked inner room, for He freely showed them to all. When

Thomas heard of it, he too wanted the same proof that had been given to the rest. And he received it. Observe that all these appearances were in the *early* part of the mysterious 40 days. The available evidence on His appearances during the latter part of that period is found in Matt. 28:16, 17, and 1 Cor. 16:6, both of which narrate events shortly before the ascension. Matthew says, "The eleven disciples went away into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him they worshipped him: but some doubted." That last clause is a significant one. Why did they doubt, they to whom He had so often appeared, to whom the wound marks were so clearly shown? I am inclined to suspect that there had been a *gradual disappearance* of those scars in consequence of a *gradual change* in the resurrection body itself. The discussion of the possibility and probability of this qualitative mutation in the elements of Christ's resurrection body, would lead me far astray from the purpose of this note. Suffice it to say that the above view throws considerable light on the nature and purpose of the 40 days interval. That interval was necessary for Christ Himself as well as for the faith of His disciples. The fact therefore that some of the eleven doubted seems to me to be a strong hint that the marks on Christ's body which had been to the disciples the clearest proofs of their Lord's identity and of the reality of the resurrection, had disappeared, and Christ stood before them with His perfect, glorified body. They noticed the change and some accordingly "doubted."

This view makes Christ's wounds real, and not magical. For the theory of accommodation which holds that Jesus could and did cause His wounds to appear and disappear for the convenient instruction of His friends, strikes me as reducing Christ's dignity and consistency of life. He never *before* did anything magically. He never showed signs merely to accommodate the curious. This consistency of His life and work He certainly would not mar by yielding to such motives at its glorious close.

Objection might here be raised, that if it will be possible for the surviving saints to put on incorruptible immortality "in the twinkling of an eye" at the last trump, why was it impossible for a similar change to take place in Christ's body? All admit the possibility, I suppose, but the question here is, Did an instantaneous change actually occur in the body of *Jesus*? I think the evidence tends strongly to a reply in the categorical *negative*. Moreover at the last trump, the change from mortality to immortality will not be repeated over and over again in a sort of a magical succession of mutations, but it will be once for all, and permanent thereafter.

A far knottier problem of exegesis lurks in Matt. 18:8, 9 than is found either in John 20:27 or 1 Cor. 15:52. There steps forth from this difficult passage the same stern question, Shall the future body be maimed, or halt? The usual figurative interpretation seems to me inadequate, inasmuch as *whatever* it be that is maimed or halt, *that* is what enters "life," whether it be the believer's natural body, the body of sin (the usual meaning given), or the spiritual body. How can the last be maimed? And how can the body of sin, whether maimed or not, be permitted to enter "life" at all? For the word "life" is antithetic to "eternal fire," "hell of fire," and evidently refers to the state of the blessed in heaven. I simply put the difficulty, waiving any present discussion of the same. The passage bears directly on the subject of Dr. Laurie's paper.

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